after his death into this flower, *lisflambe,* purple in hue. But for my purpose I shall stop at Hyacinthus, & interpret the allegory of the legend thus: that Apollo is reputed & called God of the nine Muses, who are the useful branches of knowledge, and that he also represents the Sun, who breathes into us vigour of mind and body; and he so loved Hyacinthus,—that is, natural good sense,—that after he had taken from him the vigour of youth & self-indulgence, he changed him into the flower of prudence and wisdom; so that the letters, that is, the memory of the change from self-indulgence to sobriety, remain written and manifest in the said flower of prudence & wisdom. Hyacinthus, it is true, is to-day written, or in other words spelled (*orthographie*) with the breathing h. In former times the character denoting the said breathing was not written. But the Greeks, after this legend was invented, began to use it in their regular language over their seven vowels, which are A, E, H, I, O, Υ, Ω, and over a single consonant, *Rho*—not as a letter, but as an accent; and they use it only with the said vowels & consonant, above the line of the letters. The Latins made use of it in other fashion than the Greeks, and wrote it on the line, commingling it with several other letters, so that it is considered a true letter.

I Have said that the letter A, which is the first letter of the alphaber, —otherwise called the A B C,—is made from the letter I; and this is true, representing it in a triangle, which is an odd number. The two feet of the A and the head make the said triangle; but it must be placed within a square, which is represented by the word Hyacinthus, which consists of four syllables, *Hy-a-cin-thus.* The ancients, wishing to demonstrate the extraordinary perfectness of their letters, formed and fashioned them according to the proper proportions of the three most perfect figures of geometry—the circle, the square, and the triangle. And because an odd number was always considered among the ancients as a lucky number, and they held it in such great veneration that it had its place in ceremonies and sacrifices—as we still see in our churches the glorious Trinity; and that for saying high mass there are the priest, deacon, and sub-deacon; and as Virgil says, in Eclogue VIII, *Numero deus impare gaudet,**—that is to say, God loves an odd number,—they made their first letter in the image of an odd number placed upon the square, which is an even number, to give a good opening & fortunate approach to those who may love and wish to study well-made letters.

* *Verse* 75.

THE odd number, as Macrobius says in the first book of *De Saturnalibus,** represents the male, & the even number the female, which means that, as by the conjunction of male & female man is engendered, so by the conjunction of letters syllables are made, and by the conjunction of syllables, words. And speech, by the putting together of well-assorted letters, syllables, and words, is found to be good, polished, and flowing.

* *Commentarii in Somnium Scipionis,* I, 6, 7; II, 2, 17.

THE triangle and square are comprised in a circle, which figure contains more than any other, & denotes that full & perfect acquaintance with the Muses & with goodly learning abides in well-made letters, by means of which one can study and read, write, and set down in books and in the memory, as the philosophers and ancient writers did in days of old, and as we can do by practising day and night in reading and writing.

THE END OF THE FIRST BOOK.

THE SECOND FOLLOWS.